Tracer
The McHenry County Historical Society's Quarterly Magazine
ENJOYED BY OUR MEMBERS FOR 57 YEARS
2020 - VOLUME 2

The original Riley School was moved to make way for a new modern school. It later was lost in a fire.

Ghost Towns of McHenry County:

Riley: Little "corners" on the prairie still endures today

By CRAIG L. PFANNKUCHE

It is said that early settlers who struck out into the Illinois prairie often were intimidated by the lack of trees. The little unincorporated hamlet of Riley, located just southeast of Riley Township's heart in the southwest corner of McHenry County, took root on such a prairie.

The especially rich prairie soil – so rich, a famous writer once boasted one could just about eat it – was there because of a massive Wisconsin glacier. Covering northeastern Illinois more than 13,000 years ago, it had mostly stopped it's push south along a line from north of Marengo southeastward toward Lake in the Hills. It left behind a great ridge of hilly land called the Valparaiso Moraine.

Great masses of glacial meltwater eventually cut through that ridge and spread out over the land to the south, leaving a barely undulating flat land of organic material and sand called an "outwash plain" by geologists. In the following thousands of years, a wide variety of prairie grasses spread across that land. These ancient grasslands occasionally caught fire and the ash left by those fires acted as fertilizer which enhanced the luscious growth.

Besides the soil itself, there was little in central Riley Township to attract the eyes of early settlers.

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The Tracer is a quarterly publication carrying local history topics, news and information for members of the McHenry County Historical Society.

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Because the of COVID-19 pandemic, the museum will close Nov. 1. Research requests: Call for appointment availability.

McHenry County Historical Society members enjoy FREE admission.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT:

We engage and educate current and future generations by preserving and sharing McHenry County history.

(An Illinois Not-for-profit 501c3 Corporation)

We Appreciate Our Members!

President's Column

New president creating a little history of her own

Fall is finally here. The trees are almost finished changing colors and I have completed almost a quarter of my term as president.

I hope you got to enjoy some of the beautiful weather we had and are now ready to hunker down for the cold weather and look to the historical society's offerings, to keep you entertained and safe inside.

I have been involved with the McHenry County Historical Society for a few years volunteering and then participating on the education committee. Education is my passion. Personally, I am always looking to continue my education. My undergraduate degree is in the social sciences and education methods. My master's degree is in curriculum development. Then I continued on to achieve my endorsement in administration.

My teaching career began in Chicago and moved through several states and districts until after my children were born and in school. I stayed in District 12, teaching kindergarten through fourth grade and being the principal of Ringwood Primary Center my last 13 years. Since then I have been volunteering in many fields of education; as president of my local Harrison (Wonder Lake) school board, the former Special Education District of McHenry County school board and even as president of DKG – a McHenry County Women's Professional Educators' chapter.

Karen Parks

So, it was a natural fit for me to be involved in the education department of the historical society.

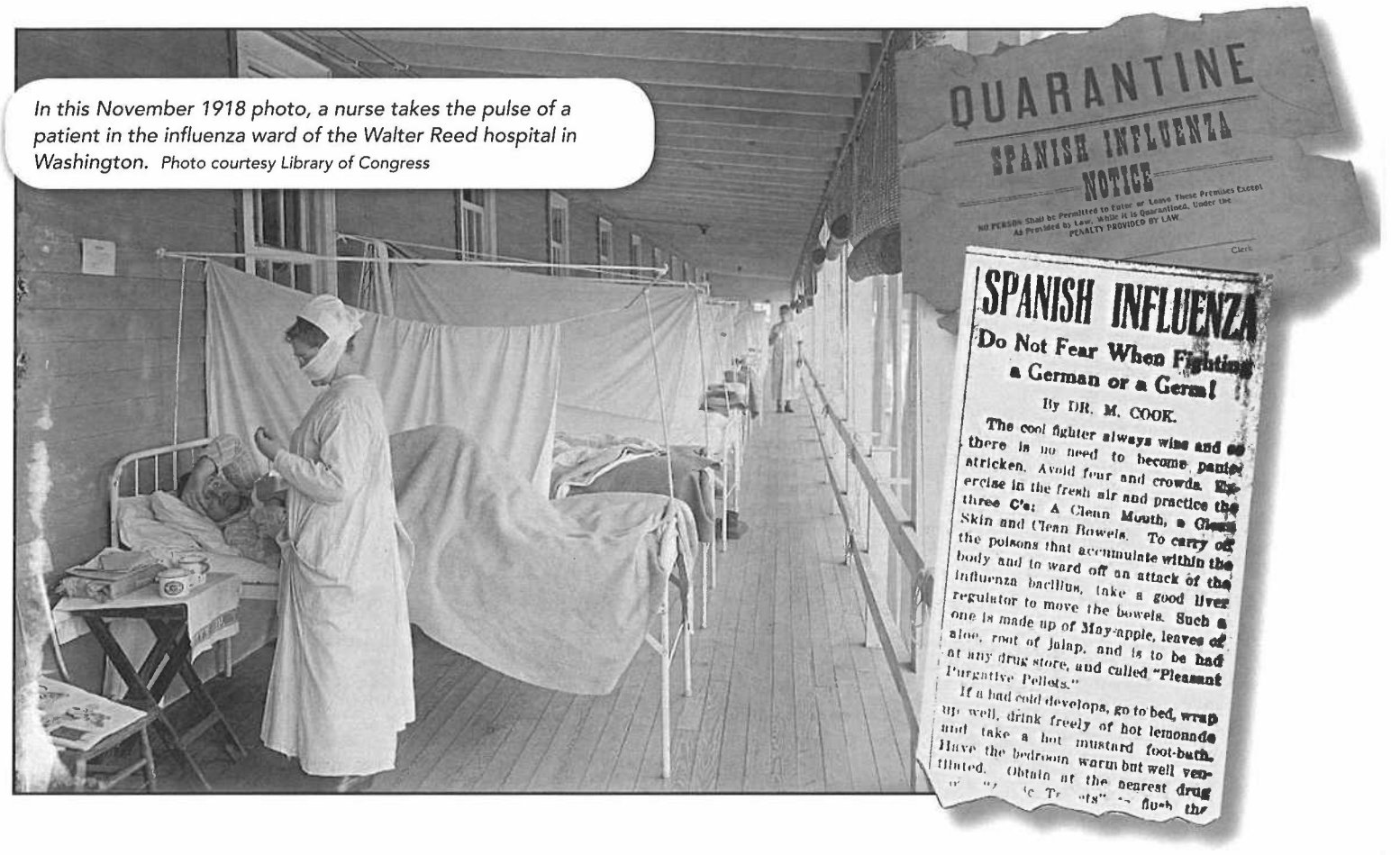
A little over a year ago, Judy Beth-Hervert asked me if I would be interested in being a board member, as she needed to leave her board position. I agreed and just one year later Molly Walsh asked if I would take on the role of president. I explained that I had a lot to learn about the MCHS, as my experiences have been limited, but if I had the support to learn as I went, I would be more than happy to accept.

This is a wonderful, dedicated group of people to work with and I have learned a lot. As I am sure it is with you, the historical society has had to change its way of doing just about everything during this time of the pandemic. We are doing our committee and board meetings virtually. We are creating programs virtually and activities folks can do at home. We have tours you can take individually of historic sites in various areas of our county.

Please check out our website for information on all of the things that we are doing. My hope as president is that we will continue to educate our citizens about the importance of preserving our county history for future generations.

I will end with this quote from Katherine Tyler Scott: "The work of nonprofit boards is to prepare and to preserve the organization for a time they will never see and for people they will never meet." Know that the support you provide MCHS now – be it with your money, time and/or as an ambassador for the organization – is deeply appreciated and that the dividends will be realized for years to come.

~ Gratefully yours,
Karen Parks



In this November 1918 photo, a nurse takes the pulse of a patient in the influenza ward of the Walter Reed hospital in Washington. Photo courtesy Library of Congress

"God's ways are not our ways"

By ROBERT FRENZ

Of the 92 McHenry County victims of the 1918 pandemic – aside from Crystal Lake-Cary – 47 were male and 45 female. Fifteen of the men were service members and died either at camp, on board ship, or in Europe. Several of the women were nurses and their deaths were often attributed to the risks of that "front line" occupation.

The youngest victims were only a year old; the oldest, a 70-year-old female. The median age of the 30 males whose ages were given was 30; the median age of death of the 28 females with known ages was only 25. Deaths in McHenry County confirmed the national and worldwide pattern – these were people in the prime of life! Only six of the victims were over 45.

Fifty of the 92 county dead, outside Crystal Lake-Cary, passed between mid-October and mid-December1918 – that second and deadliest wave (including Crystal Lake and Cary the total was 72 of the 127 deaths). By comparison there have been 122 county deaths in the eight months of the current COVID-19 pandemic, but with a population 10 times greater than in 1918-19.

In January 1919, the *Marengo Republican-News* intoned: "God's ways are not our ways, but some time, somewhere, we will understand."

Ringwood and Richmond Area

The influenza epidemic appeared to hit these two communities particularly hard. As early as September 1918, when the country was just beginning to experience the second wave, the Richmond Gazette did not print its Sept. 26 edition "owing to the illness of the entire working force." On Oct. 16, came news that Henry F. Wharton, age 37, cashier of the Ringwood Bank died "after a brave fight with that dread disease, pneumonia. Why the king of terrors claimed him thus ruthlessly, who shall say?"

Schools shut down in nearby Richmond, as well as Genoa City and Wilmot, Wis. The Gazette announced that their reopening "will depend ... entirely upon the influenza conditions at that time." The Nov. 7, 1918, Gazette brought news of the death of former resident Allan R. Crandall, 24, while serving in France. He took sick with influenza on Oct. 19 and died six days later from pneumonia. The same issue reported the

Author's note: For accounts of the pandemic's outbreak in McHenry County I have relied on local newspapers, especially the *Marengo Republican-News, McHenry Plaindealer, Richmond Gazette,* and *Woodstock Sentinel.* For the flu's impact on the Crystal Lake area please see the *Crystal Times* (a publication of the Crystal Lake Historical Society) for April-June 2018. I know that this article will be of interest to genealogists and in the case of names I have tried to reproduce the spelling as accurately as possible. Also, I have only included the names of victims when the cause of their illness or death was specifically stated as influenza or pneumonia. Of course, this eliminates many individuals who may have had the disease but whose cause of death was not attributed.

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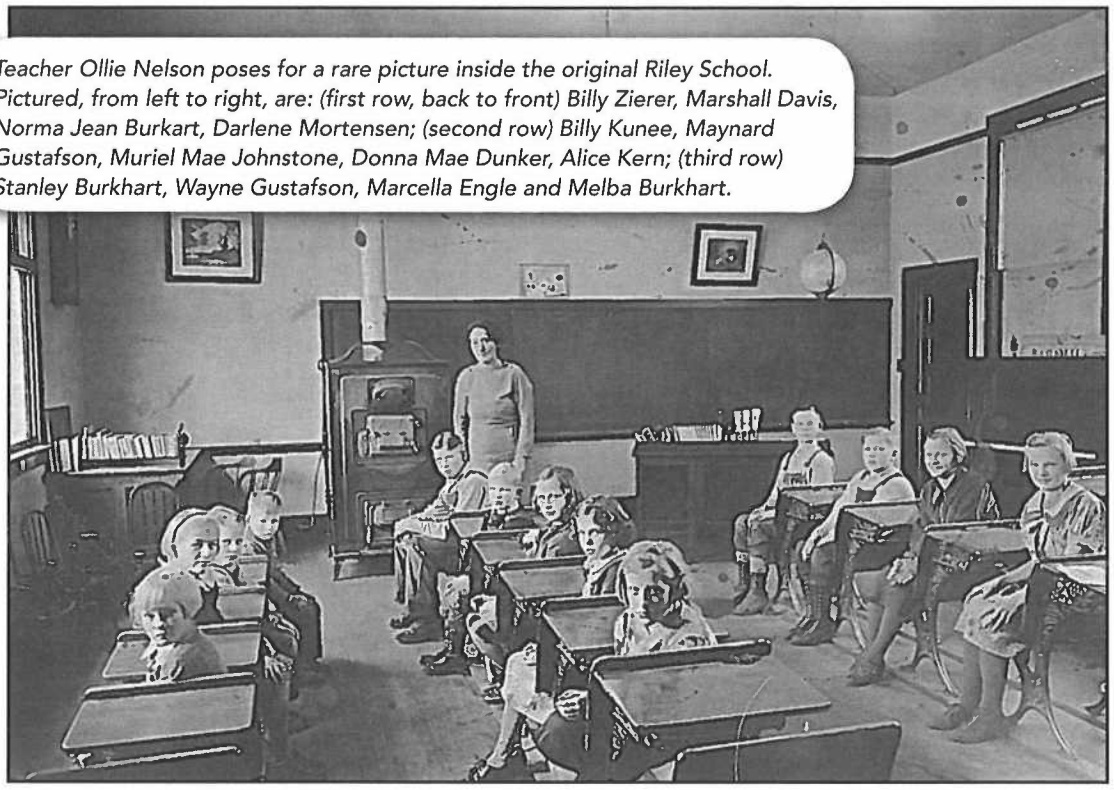

Teacher Ollie Nelson poses for a rare picture inside the original Riley School. Pictured, from left to right, are: (first row, back to front) Billy Zierer, Marshall Davis, Norma Jean Burkart, Darlene Mortensen; (second row) Billy Kunee, Maynard Gustafson, Muriel Mae Johnstone, Donna Mae Dunker, Alice Kern; (third row) Stanley Burkhart, Wayne Gustafson, Marcella Engle and Melba Burkhart.

Other communities in the county were settled along well-worn trails and stream fords; by nearby lakes or along streams which could be dammed for power to turn millstones and saw blades. A small stream, originally called Racoon Creek, did flow along the west edge of what would become the hamlet of Riley. However, the flow was too paltry to power a mill and the stream's banks were too low to allow for a mill pond to be built.

In fact, the whole of Riley Township would be described in the *1885 History of McHenry* (page 924) as being "one of the most sparsely watered townships in the county."

A map of Riley Township, developed by surveyors working for the federal government's General Land Office in Chicago in 1839, shows a bulge of timbered land – mostly cottonwoods – covering Section 22, where Riley would come to be. But surveyors classified much of the ground as "swampy." Little wonder, there is no record of Native American trails through that area.

So, what drew these people to Riley? Today, we see agriculture as a business with farmers working hard to produce a crop which will bring them a reasonable profit. Back then, pioneer farmers coveted fertile land on which they could raise crops and animals and sustain their families. In the case of Riley, haying of native prairie grasses was an especially important activity. These grasses, tucked away in a barn after being allowed to dry, would allow a family's cow to survive over the cold and barren winter.

A cow meant milk, butter and cheese. Lastly a few hogs, mostly left free to root for nourishment among the cottonwoods and marshes along Cook Creek, completed the picture.

Perhaps it was the cottonwoods which caught an early settler's eye. No written sources exist to tell us what enticed whites to the area, but they began to trickle in following the 1832 Blackhawk War.

Both the *1877 Directory of McHenry County*, as well as the *1885 History of McHenry County*, credit a T. Whitman Cobb from Vermont with being the first white person to settle in Riley Township. Interestingly, the 1885 history also states that he settled in Seneca Township that same year in 1836.

The 1850 federal census of McHenry County has Cobb living in Section 30 of Coral Township. Although the 1885 history asserts that he died a short time after 1874 in Riley, he actually died on Feb. 2, 1866, according to his gravestone in the Riley Cemetery.

The 1885 history says that an old gentleman by the name of Samuel Smith settled in the township in 1837. He was not there long as he died in the same year and is buried at an unknown location in the township. Others, such as Roswell Bates, came to Riley Township just after 1838.

New Yorkers Charles and Laura Knapp, who are said to have appeared in 1837, settled in a long-forgotten location. The first of their 10 children, William Knapp, was born in Pennsylvania. A second son, George, arrived while they were in Michigan. Their third, Ezra, born in 1838, was the first white child born in Riley Township.

They may have been living in Section 11 of Riley Township, just to the north of the future hamlet of Riley. The General Land Office map shows a plowed field in sections 10 and 11, two miles north of where the settlement sprang up.

Riley lies in just about the center of the northeast quarter of Section 22 in the township. The identities of those responsible for organizing a township government on the site, have been lost to time. Interestingly, with the exception of Roswell Bates and Norris Barnes, none of early settlers mentioned in the 1877 directory or the 1885 lived in "town." Both Bates and Barnes made federal land claims within the township in March 1840, but they were at least 2 to 3 miles to the east of the community. The earliest federal land claim, 160 acres in the southeast quarter of the northeast quarter of Section 22, was made by Henry Johnson. He staked his claim in 1846 – which probably means that he was actually on the land by 1839. Johnson, born 1816 in Vermont, is not found in the 1840 federal census of Riley. He and his young family are listed in the 1850 census, but they moved elsewhere by 1860.

Jonas Underwood and his son, Henry came to Section 22 and laid claim to 80 acres in 1845. Jonas died on May 5, 1856, and became among the first to be buried in the Riley Cemetery, consecrated in 1850. Henry became one of the founders of Riley. He eventually moved to Marengo, where he died on Aug. 2, 1895.

The Richardsons, Henry and Charles, also were early

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settlers, coming from Connecticut. It was this family which deeded property for what is today called the Riley Center Memorial Cemetery. Henry Richardson died in 1869 in Belvidere.

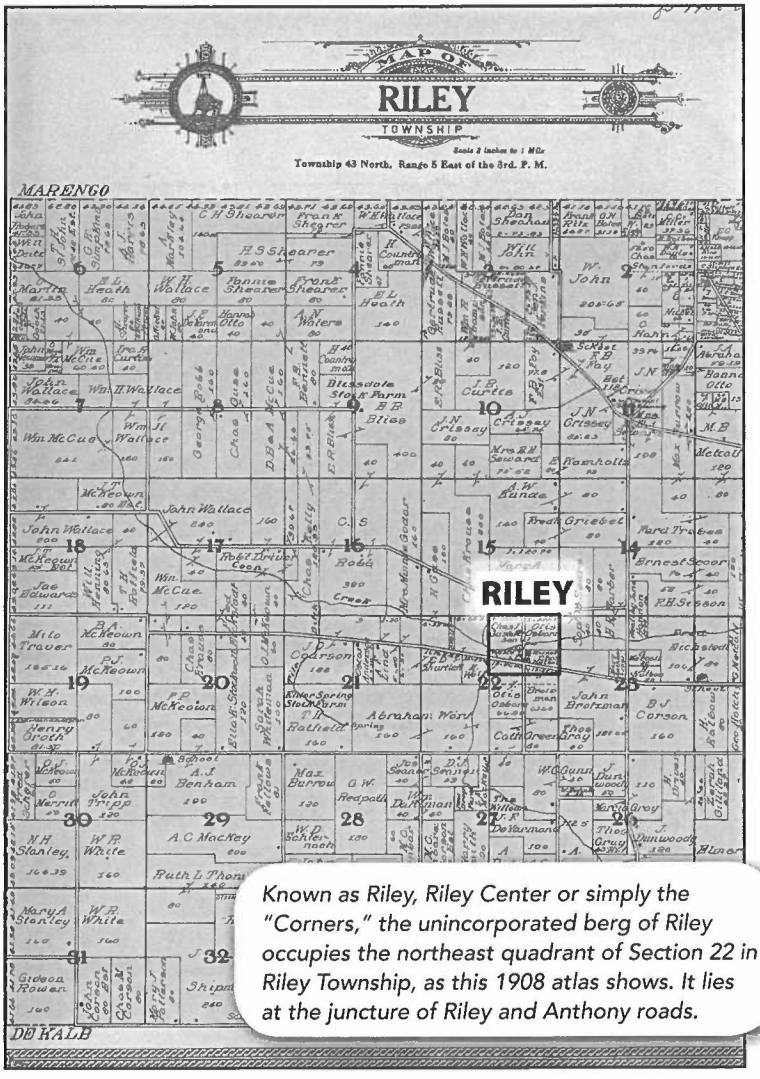
In November 1845, a Jonathan Kidder of Massachusetts (misspelled as Kudder) and his son, Elmer, claimed land for the whole north half of Section 22. The senior Kidder died in June 1865 and was buried near the center of the hamlet. Elmer left shortly after the death of his father in 1860 and settled his family in Iowa.

A small building to house the Riley Township government likely was erected on the Kidder property. The 1885 county history book noted that Riley was the only township in the county to erect a building for the exclusive purpose of holding elections, meetings, etc. This was a necessity since the township was devoid of a hall or any public house to accommodate meetings. The 1868 building remains the oldest active town hall in McHenry County.

However, the first town meeting actually was in a school. It hosted the first town elections in April 1850. In his book, *Historic County Schools of McHenry County, Illinois*, Robert Frenz was able to find a reference to a school in the hamlet as early as 1861.

"When the new Riley Consolidated School was completed, the old one-room building was removed," Frenz writes. It was sold to William Meyer, who moved it to 22403 Pleasant Grove Road. It later was destroyed in a fire. That new school, built in 1948 at the northeast corner of Riley and Anthony roads, remains in use today.

Before the Corners hosted a modern grade school, a one-room school built in 1914 along Harmony Road. In 1955 it moved next to the Methodist church to serve area children. After the modern Riley School was constructed and the district no longer had any use for the old school, the 1895 West Harmony School was moved to the grounds of the McHenry County Historical Society in Union for use as a living reminder of what school life was like at the turn of the century.



Known as Riley, Riley Center or simply the "Corners," the unincorporated berg of Riley occupies the northeast quadrant of Section 22 in Riley Township, as this 1908 atlas shows. It lies at the juncture of Riley and Anthony roads.

At one time, there were eight one-room schools operating in Riley Township. South Riley School, situated on Burrows Road, was the last to close in 1947.

As for religious needs, the 1862 plat map of McHenry County appears to show a church at Riley Center. However, the *1877 Directory of McHenry County, Illinois*, states: "Having plenty of facilities in adjoining townships, they [Riley residents] have erected no church within their limits." Some sources state that church services in Riley were held in private homes as early as 1858. When the town hall was built, services were held there.

The Riley Methodist Church finally was built in 1897. That church has been owned by the McHenry County Historical Society since 2009. However, lack of sustained use as a church resulted in the loss of its county conditional-use permit – something MCHS cannot secure without restrooms, a well and enough land to accommodate them. Following repairs to the roof and work to stabilize the walls, the MCHS Board of Directors voted to pursue selling the church.

Even without a church, weddings did take place in the village. In the very first marriage in the village, a Justice of the Peace married Spencer Flanders to Caroline Cobb in August 1841. Caroline died in November 1866 while Spencer died in 1882. They are buried together in the Marengo City Cemetery.

The first plantings were what is called "sod corn," planted by dropping seeds in small holes made in tough prairie sod with an axe. By the early 1850s, area farmers would sow wheat in those small fields, which were "broken" by newly invented steel-blade plows. This crop would allow for both an improved diet for the famer and, a railroad to Chicago having reached Babcock's Grove – later called Marengo – gave farmers a better way to obtain cash for their hard work. After a newly invented McCormick reaper cut the standing wheat, the stalks were hand thrashed to remove the seed from the stalks. The loose grains were sacked and loaded onto a wagon and hauled the four miles north to the railroad and sent on to Chicago where massive grain elevators were being erected to hold that golden harvest.

Additionally, gardens, planted next to cottonwood log houses, were extremely important to a family's survival. In those years, the work of women in the family garden was as important to the survival of the family as was the work of men. Women also tended orchards and berry bushes near the family homes which would provide fruits for preserving. A line in the Riley section of the 1922 history of the county (Vol. I, p. 452) notes that "[Riley] was early among the townships of the county to set out fruit trees and reaped the reward of such action by later harvesting large crops of luscious apples and cherries."

Farmers slowly began transitioning away from a sustenance economy to what economists call a market economy. By 1850,

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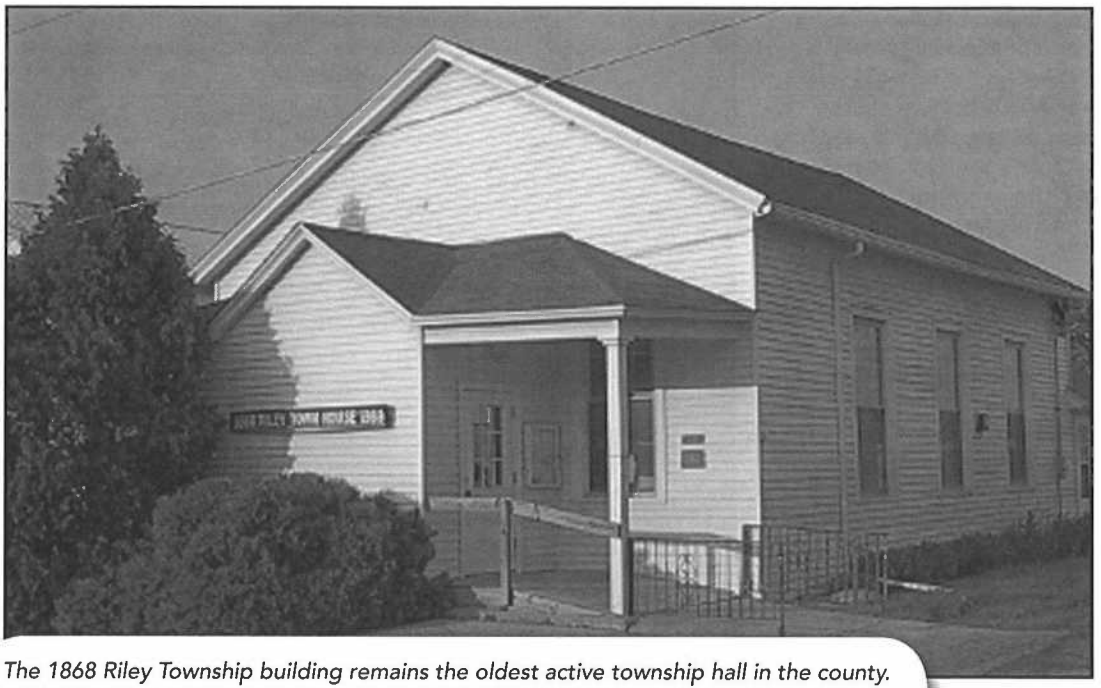

The 1868 Riley Township building remains the oldest active township hall in the county. Back when it was built, community functions typically were held in one-room schools or churches. However, being bereft of any hall or public house to accommodate governmental meetings, the community took the extraordinary step of building a structure dedicated for that purpose. It even accommodated church services for a time.

Henry G. Hastings saw an opportunity in Riley to establish himself as a "merchant" at the "corners" while Joshua Waldo and Washington Nichols opened a blacksmith shop. Waldo married Julia Babcock in Riley on Jan. 1, 1849. The Babcock family arrived in the area in the late 1840s. Following the death of his wife in 1845, Nichols married Elvira Potter in Kane County and moved to Riley. The Nichols family remained in Riley until after the Civil War, when it removed to Medina, Ohio.

Hastings married Amanda Metcalf in Riley in July 1850. She may have died soon after since he soon moved to Buchanan, Iowa. He is recorded, along with a young son, in the 1855 Iowa census. And that is where he died in May 1857. After Hastings moved, his store at the corners was run by William H. Rockwood.

Not only was the general store under new ownership, but what the township's farmers were doing by 1860 also changed. The demand for dairy products and meat mirror the unprecedented growth of Chicago. Riley Township famers always found that prairie hay made marvelous fodder for their milk cows. Wheels of cheese could be transported easily and would bring in needed hard currency.

At the same time, farmers found that stock grazing on those same grasses would bring in meaningful amounts of cash. Beef on the hoof could be driven the short distance to Marengo and loaded on the Chicago and North Western's cattle cars for the ride to Chicago's northside slaughterhouses.

The Civil War intensified such changes. A disease, characterized by biologists as "rust," had struck and destroyed wheat crops across Illinois in the late 1850s – taking away an important percent of farm income. Thankfully, immigrants from the Ukraine headed to Iowa, Nebraska and Minnesota had brought with them a variety of "Russian Red" wheat which was immune to the rust. This led to the growth of great swaths of wheat farming across the north central United States.

Riley area farmers made up losses on wheat by turning almost exclusively to dairying and raising stock. The coming of the Civil War caused a spike in demand for just such products. Chicago responded by creating the Union Stock Yards on the city's south side. Riley farmers did their best to help fill that demand ... and the demand for soldiers to serve in the Union army. The invention of the McCormick reaper greatly reduced the need for farm labor, as did the shift to raising livestock.

The 1885 history states that: "Many cattle are raised and fattened [there] for the market [while] the dairy business is carried on quite extensively and successfully."

A surprising number of men from Riley became involved in the war. Algonquin's Donald Purn, who made an exhaustive census of McHenry County Civil War soldiers, notes that at least 15 veterans are buried in the Riley Memorial Cemetery. The 1968 history of McHenry County lists 16 men who are buried in the Riley cemetery as having been Civil War veterans. Other men such as Amos Capron, who would operate a cheese factory in Riley after the war, joined the 95th Illinois Infantry and was badly wounded in the siege at Vicksburg. He survived his wound but died of its effects in March 1884. He is buried in the Union Cemetery. Another was John Renie, who served in and survived the war but died from the effects in 1873 – just three years after his wife presented him with twins.

By 1870, Riley's growth simply stabilized. The federal census of that year lists a John Callihan with the occupation of weaver. Brothers Ezra and John Knapp were listed as butchers. An 1872 plat map of Riley Township shows that a "cheese factory" located in the north side of the hamlet was in operation by that year. Life in the Corners continued on quietly and successfully into the 1890s.

Even though Marengo with its numerous stores and resources was located just 4 miles north of the corners, travel was often a difficult proposition in wet spring weather and following heavy snowstorms. At the same time, the nation's major railroads were under attack for seeming to pay scant attention to the transportation needs of the masses. Some envisioned a vast network of cheaper-to-build electric rail lines called "interurbans," which would solve rural transportation problems. The public was overjoyed to learn in late 1908

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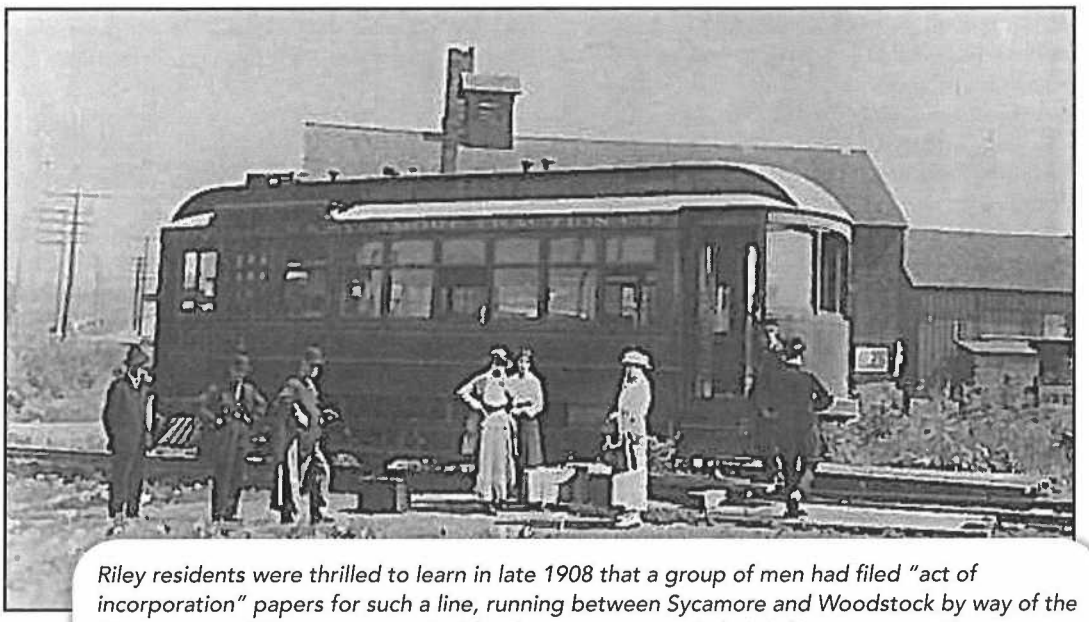
that a group of men had filed "act of incorporation" papers for such a line, running between Sycamore and Woodstock by way of the Riley corners. The proposed line was envisioned as a people mover – using powered, single-unit "McKeen" cars to ferry passengers. (the noted Milwaukee Road)

While the company was able to build north to Genoa from Sycamore, it was stymied for a time by the refusal of the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad (the noted "Milwaukee Road) to allow the interurban company to cross its tracks at Genoa. It was not until the W&S was able to bridge the Milwaukee Road's tracks that an uninterrupted line could be utilized between Sycamore and Marengo.



Riley residents were thrilled to learn in late 1908 that a group of men had filed "act of incorporation" papers for such a line, running between Sycamore and Woodstock by way of the Riley corners. Although plans called for the construction of electric lines to power the cars, as a cost-saving measure these gas-powered cars built by the McKeen Motor Car Co. of Omaha, Neb., were used. They featured acetylene gas-powered interior lights and hot-water radiators. The Woodstock & Sycamore Traction Co. operated from June 1911 until early 1918.

William E. Robertson, in his booklet, *The Woodstock and Sycamore Traction Company (1985),* relates that the W & S began laying track northward toward Marengo from Genoa in the late summer of 1910. The line followed a generally northeasterly course in a peculiar step-like fashion paralleling right angle section line roads which were hardly more than farm cart tracks back then. At Harmony Road the line proceeded east on its north side as far as Riley Road, where it turned north on its east side and immediately passed through the small settlement of Riley. The line climbed an embankment to cross Coon, before heading east along the north side of Grange Road to Route 23 northward.

Service between Genoa and Marengo went into operation in June 1911. Robertson writes that the company sponsored "... a big celebration in a grove by the south branch of Cook Creek along Harmony Road. There were refreshments and stirring music. The car ran all day with half fares donated to the music makers. A total of 800 people attended the festivities, in spite of some rain."

Three times a day a car ran through Riley Township's "corners" in each direction, until September 1916 economic problems caused service to become intermittent. Service came to halt in early 1918. The rails of the interurban were taken up late in 1918. Mr. Robertson was able to photograph remnants of the W&S right of way near Riley as late as 1982.

At the same time that the interurban line was being pulled up, another big change came to central Riley Township and the "corners." Up until then, most Riley farmers had found that dairying and stock raising were profitable, supplemented by the township's abundant supply of free hay as feed during the winter. But with the growth of livestock operations in Nebraska and Kansas, Riley area farmers began to contemplate other sources of income. In 1910, a plan was devised to drain the township's wet prairie areas so that massive crops of feed corn could be planted.

The ditching and tiling work focused on the "Big Slough" area, more than 7,100 acres downstream from Coon Creek headwaters. *The Marengo Republican* reported on the rumor of a new "Coon Creek Drainage District," which would "threaten to rob hunters of the biggest and best duck grounds left in northern Illinois." The reporter noted that the proposed project would "add to the tillable acreage of Boone and McHenry counties many thousands of acres of rich land."

A meeting to formalize such a drainage district was held in Garden Prairie (since the "Big Slough" spanned both counties) on Jan. 18, 1911. It took four years to legally set up the district, elect district commissioners (Albert McCue of Section 7 of Riley Township as president), and determine how the dredging work was to be undertaken.

In May 1917, a "boat" with a "1 ½-yard dipper" sat in the creek and began to dig out an open 8-foot-deep drainage ditch up to 50 feet wide. "In addition to the ditch, here will be 16 miles of tile up to 27 inches in diameter." The project, even for area farmers living beyond the boundaries of the "Big Slough," was successful. Many thousands of acres of corn were planted, where once only prairie grasses grew.

The drainage district was active into the 1940s and became reactivated about 1980. In 1985, George and Naomi MacIntyre petitioned the district to clean out the Coon Creek ditch which was filing in with erosion silt and a variety of "junk," causing flooding of valuable tillage lands. The Illinois Department of Conservation objected to the idea saying that a rechannelization of the creek would destroy what had become an "excellent quality wildlife stream." Naomi MacIntyre responded to that assertion saying: "We are farmers here. We make our living off the land not fish. Farming is what pays the taxes in Riley Township."

The rechanneling petition was denied.

Today, the Corners is – except for the noise made by happy students at recess – a quiet intersection of two local roads where a silent, contemplative air soothes visitors. ◆

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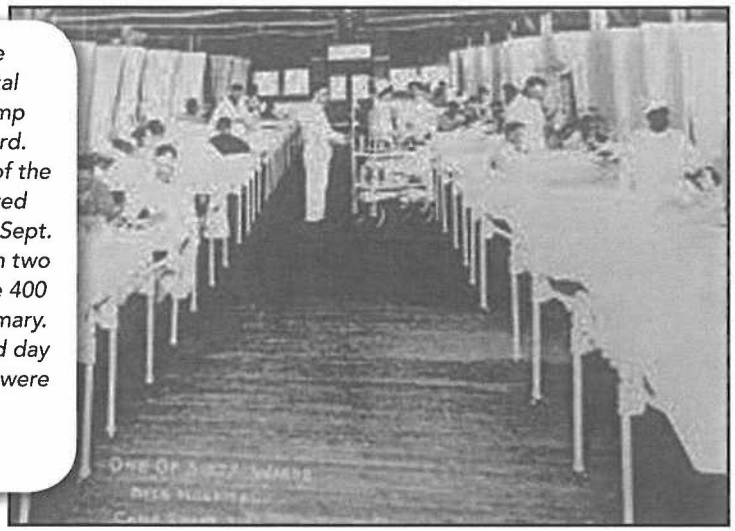

A picture of one of the 60 hospital buildings at Camp Grant in Rockford. The first cases of the Spanish flu arrived at the camp on Sept. 21, 1917. Within two days there were 400 men in the infirmary. And by the third day the first deaths were recorded.

Photo provided by Terry Dyer

tragic passing of Mrs. Henry Gant of nearby Camp Lake, Wis. Hers' was the third death in the immediate family. She left a husband and several young children. The passing of Miss Mae Sherman "came as a shock to her many friends." Thinking she had recovered from a bout with the flu, she "had resumed her duties at the [Richmond] bank." On a happier note, the paper announced that Richmond station agent, Frank Howden, was back on the job after "a two weeks siege of influenza."

"Influenza holds full sway in Illinois [with 43,825 cases] among categories of diseases. Cemeteries are putting bodies in receiving vaults until graves can be dug. At one cemetery in Paris, Illinois all the employees are ill with influenza."

– Nov. 7, 1918 - *McHenry Plaindealer*

By Nov. 21, Fox Lake reported 50 cases of influenza, schools closed, and the mayor's wife, Mrs. George Nagal, dead – leaving behind three small children. Two young couples from Ringwood also died from influenza in November. Elmer Linderman and his wife, Mattie (nee Smith) were only 24 and 22, respectively, at the time of their deaths. A 2-year-old daughter and 1-year-old son survived. The other couple, Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Francisco, ages 27 and 23, although originally from Ringwood, had moved to Michigan. They passed just a few hours apart. He had worked at the Oliver Typewriter factory in Woodstock before taking a job as a railway mail clerk. All four burials were at the Ringwood Cemetery.

And then there was this, just before Christmas: "DeWitt T. Dixon, well known here, passed away at his late home in Silver Lake, Wis. December 14th a victim of the prevalent malady, influenza, at the boyhood age of 26 years, 4 months, and 21 days leaving a wife and 3-year-old son."

"More Americans have now died from influenza than had died in [General] Pershing's Army."

– U.S. Census Bureau, November 1918

Disease and death took a brief Christmas holiday in Richmond and Ringwood but resumed its destructive force shortly after the beginning of the new year. Was this the beginning of the third wave or a continuation of the second?

The Jan. 2, 1919, *Sentinel* announced that Ringwood's Harry Stephenson died in a military hospital in England from pneumonia. Reports of flu cases accelerated by mid-January. Area schools again closed their doors; first, for a week at a time, then two.

On Feb. 6, the *McHenry Plaindealer* reported the death of Mrs. Joseph E. Miller of rural Richmond. This was doubly tragic because she died only three days after giving birth to a daughter and less than a month after the death of her sister, Mrs. Mathias Smith (see McHenry-Johnsburg), also "a victim of the much-dreaded disease." Mrs. Miller was survived by her husband and four small children. Serving as a stark reminder that this "dread disease" did not discriminate based on social class or occupation, the March 13 Sentinel reported the passing of Dr. Guy Gordon of Richmond. The death announcement stated:

"He had only been sick since Wednesday. Pneumonia developed and no earthly or medical aid could save him. Great sympathy goes to the heartbroken widow and little son, who is [also] sick and under the care of trained nurses."

Two weeks later came news of the passing of another Richmond area soldier – Paul Hoffman, who died in a military hospital in France on March 8. Born in Spring Grove, he was only 33 years old. His was the last of the 14 deaths recorded in the area press.

Alden, Hebron, South Hebron Area

The Spanish Influenza virus also hit these small, rural communities particularly hard. The first recorded fatality was that in mid-September of John Janowski, a soldier at Camp Grant (Rockford). Janowski, 26, lived near Alden and had only been ill a few days with pneumonia. The Oct. 24, 1918, Sentinel announced the suspension of military enrollments "due to the flu epidemic" and also reported a second local death – that of Clarence Lyman Wickam, 29, who left behind a young wife. The same edition surely stunned the small village with news of the passing of Mattie (Behrens) Spencer. Twenty-four-year-old Mattie left a bereaved husband, a 2½-year-old daughter, and 3-week-old son when she died on Oct. 19 "of Spanish influenza."

On a more positive note, the Oct. 31, 1918, *Plaindealer* detailed the heroic efforts of two Hebron women – Hettie Randall and Bernice Smith – in treating influenza patients at the famed Todd School for Boys in Woodstock, after the school's nurse became critically ill herself:

"Miss Randall secured the services of Mrs. Bernice Smith of Hebron to assist her in caring for the sick. Mrs. Smith, who completed a course in nursing, was a valuable aid in the work and for the past two weeks the two Hebron young ladies have been mighty busy taking care of the patients, and to date they have been most successful, having brought everyone along toward recovery in good shape."

Then, on Nov. 21, came news of the death of another area soldier, Pvt. Eugene Drill, following an attack of influenza. *The Plaindealer* noted that, "He is the first of Hebron's young men to die in service." Charles Elliot, 29, a fireman for the Chicago & North Western Railroad, died of "Flu-monia" at the end of October leaving a wife and two small children.

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"Hebron teacher, Miss Emma Helm, is able to resume her duties after illness with influenza."

"Hebron is a very quiet place these days. Everyone stays at home either because they have the flu or in their effort to avoid it."

– Nov. 7 and Dec. 5, 1918 - *Woodstock Sentinel*

Fred Schmidt, 19, residing south of Alden, succumbed to influenza in early November. The Sentinel noted that his whole family had been sick. November also brought news that a third local soldier, Charles Knutson, age 28 of Hebron had died "of pneumonia" following influenza. Knutson, a member of the 342nd Infantry, passed away in a military hospital in Portsmouth, England.

The influenza epidemic did not take a Christmas holiday in Hebron during that sad winter of 1918-19. David Russell Niver, 35, died in mid-December "of pneumonia following an attack of influenza." *The Sentinel* noted that Niver was a graduate of Hebron High School (Class of 1899) and left a wife, two daughters and a son. Leonard Frank Hansen, 18, who lived his entire life in Hebron Township, had only been sick about two weeks prior to his death. Especially poignant was the announcement in the Sentinel of the passing of Hilda Knutson, 19, (Class of 1917, Hebron High School):

"When Uncle Sam called for more nurses this fall, Miss Knutson enlisted and had been on duty only three days at a hospital in Chicago when she was taken with influenza, which developed into pneumonia a week later, and she passed away on December 11th." [Her brother died in England 2 ½ months earlier on his way to France.]

The last recorded death in Hebron was that of Frank Frederick Schultz, who "was taken with influenza about a week ago and was too weak to withstand the disease." His funeral was New Year's Day on what would have been his 35th birthday.

"The South Hebron Schools have been closed for three weeks because of the flu epidemic."

– Jan. 2, 1919 - *Woodstock Sentinel*

Harvard Area

Again, demonstrating that the virus did not respect social class or political standing, its first victim was Harvard's Calvin J. Hendricks, a candidate for county judge. *The Plaindealer* referred to Hendricks, age 46 at the time of his death on Sept 27, as "strong and robust." The article noted that Hendricks "had been confined to his bed just 10 days, starting with a siege of the grip [flu], which developed into pneumonia."

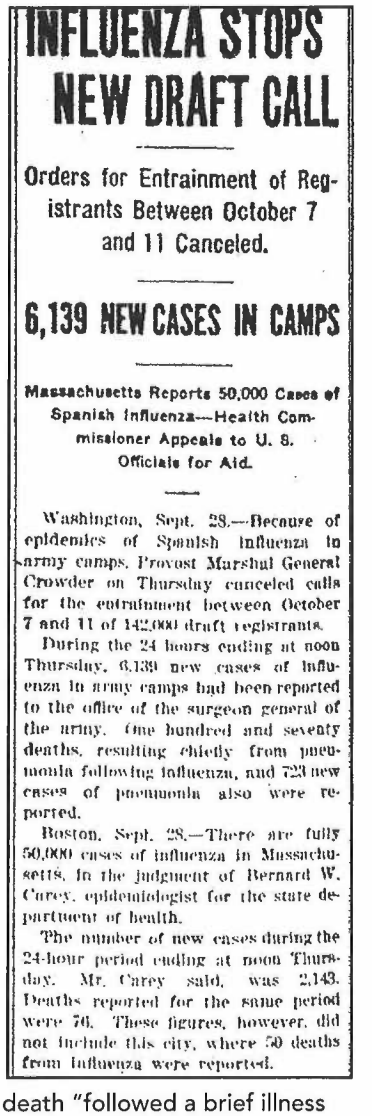
The Oct. 24 *Sentinel* reported the passing of Mrs. Floyd Willoughby, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. W.D. Cornwell of Lawrence. Just 35 years old at the time of her death following a week's illness, she was survived by her husband and one son. And a week later came news of the passing of Harvard teacher, Miss Marie Nolan. John A. Brickley, 18, a 1918 graduate of Harvard High School, also died in late October. A resident of West Dunham, he was a student at St. Viator's College.

"Mrs. Margaret Eyre Stirling Baldwin who recently posed as Columbia for James Montgomery Flagg to aid the Fourth Liberty Loan is dead here [Baltimore] of pneumonia following an attack of influenza."

– Oct. 24, 1918 - *McHenry Plaindealer*

November proved an especially cruel month that year in Harvard, especially for the young. First came news of the passing of 17-year old Miss Esther Cooper, who died Nov. 23 "following an illness from influenza." The *Sentinel* noted that she worked at Black Cat Textiles. Twelve- year old, Miss Hazel Tesch, the youngest victim of the virus, died at home on the 29th "following an illness of one week from influenza." Then, a second Harvard teacher, Miss Frieda Wulf, succumbed to the dread virus after an illness of one week. The *Sentinel* noted that the 28 year- old teacher at Washington School was "a general favorite with the pupils."

Harvard did not escape the third wave of the pandemic, either. Death paid a return visit beginning in January 1919. The Jan. 16 *Sentinel* reported that "Mrs. Lyle Dean is quite seriously ill with influenza-pneumonia" and that teacher, Miss Lila Lauderdale had been ill for three weeks. The next week the paper announced that Miss Lauderdale had recovered but that Mrs. Dean's death "followed a brief illness from pneumonia." The illness claimed Alden Township farmer James Joseph Maguire, 36, on Feb. 7 after an illness of several weeks.



INFLUENZA STOPS NEW DRAFT CALL

Orders for Entrainment of Registrants Between October 7 and 11 Canceled.

6,139 NEW CASES IN CAMPS

Massachusetts Reports 50,000 Cases of Spanish Influenza—Health Commissioner Appeals to U. S. Officials for Aid.

Washington, Sept. 28.—Because of epidemics of Spanish influenza in army camps, Provost Marshal General Crowder on Thursday canceled calls for the entrainment between October 7 and 11 of 142,000 draft registrants.

During the 24 hours ending at noon Thursday, 6,139 new cases of influenza in army camps had been reported to the office of the surgeon general of the army, one hundred and seventy deaths, resulting chiefly from pneumonia following influenza, and 723 new cases of pneumonia also were reported.

Boston, Sept. 28.—There are fully 50,000 cases of influenza in Massachusetts, in the judgment of Bernard W. Carey, epidemiologist for the state department of health.

The number of new cases during the 24-hour period ending at noon Thursday, Mr. Carey said, was 2,143. Deaths reported for the same period were 76. These figures, however, did not include this city, where 50 deaths from influenza were reported.

February also brought grim news about one of the oldest victims. Phoebe Kane, 70, died "after a two weeks' struggle with pneumonia."

"The treasury of the Modern Woodmen of America (a benevolent society) is depleted by extraordinary death losses during the past four months. Normal losses of $1 million a month became $3 million."

– Feb. 13, 1919 - *Woodstock Sentinel*

Harvard's last victims all died in late March 1919. They included John Wiedhoff , 42, and Mrs. David Hutchinson Jr. (the former Marjorie Downs), 25. Neither fully recovered from a flu attack. Tragically, Marjorie's husband was still in the service and unable to get home for her funeral. The last recorded victim of the pandemic in Harvard, Miss Mable Hall, died March 24 at the home of her parents following an illness of one week. The Sentinel noted that 25-year old Mable worked as a "dining room" girl at Ayer's Hotel.

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"State's Attorney V.S. Lumley and his assistant, Charles Allen, are back at work after being confined to their homes with Spanish flu." – Oct. 31, 1918 - McHenry Plaindealer

"States Attorney Lumley has still not recovered from his bout with influenza. He has gone to French Lick Springs, Ind. to recuperate." – Feb. 20, 1919 - *McHenry Plaindealer*

Marengo, Union, Huntley Area

This southwestern quadrant of the county proved as susceptible to the virus as any other area. Regular rail service, electric trolley lines, improved roads, and more automobiles facilitated the spread of the dread disease. The first recorded fatality here was that of Mrs. Frank Guse on Aug. 24. A lifelong resident of Marengo and only 33 years old, she left a husband and five children. *The Marengo Republican-News* reported: "Her sudden death was a great shock to family and friends, coming as it did with but brief warning."

In Huntley, the Gilbert Tracey family was also mourning the death of their 1 ½-year-old son. Although there were no further reports of flu sickness in the September press, the virus struck again with a vengeance in October. In rapid succession came the passing of Mrs. George Kuecker who was survived by her week-old baby and husband, a conductor on the interurban; Roy Russell, also a victim of influenza, and Miss Emma Dittberner, who died at her Marengo home after two weeks illness with influenza.

At the end of October, the *Sentinel*, under the heading "Flu Epidemic Diminishes But Ban Still On," reminded its readers of the prohibition of dancing, lodge meetings, public funerals, all social gatherings, and hospital visitations, except in emergencies. Schools could open only with "adequate" medical and nursing supervision. Seemingly contradicting their assessment from the previous week, the editors reassured their subscribers that even though the epidemic appeared nearly over, the public must keep its guard up.

Ironically, the same Oct. 31 issue reported the death of the 21-year-old daughter of Richard Pagelkopf of nearby Franklinville ("sick but a few days"), the passing of the daughter of A.A. Adams of Marengo, and the death of Frank Hellwig of Union who was in military training in Texas – the paper noted that his mother was able to reach his bedside in time to say good-bye to her son.

"This dreadful epidemic of Spanish influenza still seems quite prevalent throughout the county."

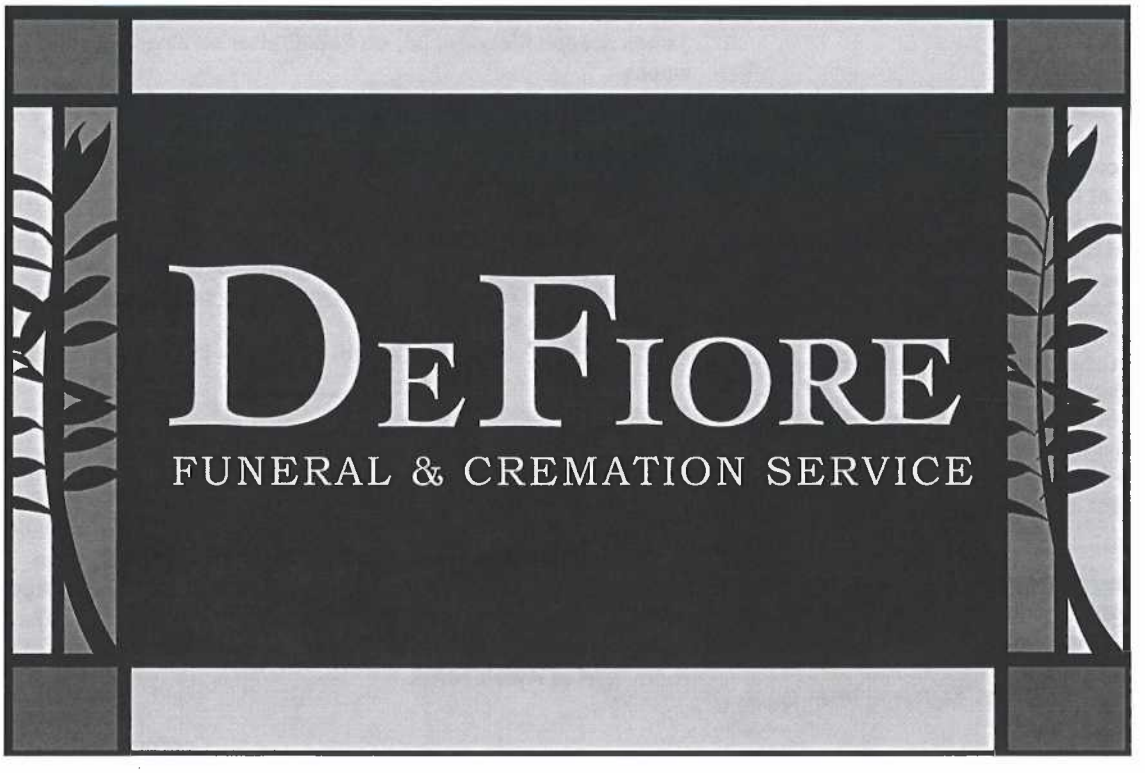
"The Pleasant Valley School was closed last week by order of the State Board of Health."

"The Huntley School is re-opening after being closed for about a month due to the epidemic."

– Oct. 24, Nov. 7 and 21, 1918 - *Woodstock Sentinel*

Sickness and death did not take a Thanksgiving or Christmas holiday for area residents in that terrible winter of 1918-19. On December 5th the *Sentinel* announced the loss of a Marengo man, Ernest Kalbow, while serving with 149th Infantry in England. Marengo rural schoolteacher, Alice Green, only 19 and a 1918 graduate of Woodstock High School, died Dec. 8. Mrs. W.H. Wallace, also of Marengo, was "taken down" with influenza only about a week earlier.

In Huntley, Mrs. Joseph Smith died of pneumonia on Dec. 15, leaving her husband and several small children. Huntley resident, Charles Oberst, age 40, died of the flu on Dec. 11. Serviceman Henry Miller, whose parents lived in Union, died in England. And another soldier, Arthur Graupner, 24, of Huntley, died just before Christmas of pneumonia following an attack of influenza. He had just returned from Camp Grant where he mustered out of the Army. His body was accompanied to the Huntley Cemetery by the Volunteer Fire Department he had previously served. David Lublin, a young Marengo resident with a wife and 2 small children, died just after Christmas of pneumonia resulting from influenza.



"The Village of Cary Station was relieved of the quarantine for influenza Wednesday morning ... by the local health board. Churches and schools will re-open."

"There are a number of cases of flu in Union. Three from the same family are sick in Coral. A nurse has been summoned."

– Dec. 12, 1918 - *Woodstock Sentinel*

The pandemic's third wave struck here in early January 1919. Early reports of sickness and school closures foreshadowed the suffering and death to come: "William Koplin's family are all sick with the flu. ... School has

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been closed for five weeks in the River Road District [probably Diggins School]. ... Miss Elizabeth Ottens is unable to return to her school because of illness. ...The attendance at school [Burr Oak] has been very small ... owing to the fact that nearly all the homes have been afflicted with influenza."

The first reported death of the new year was that of Mrs. Lelia White-Sears, 37, of Garden Prairie. *The Marengo Republican-News* attributed her death to her career as a nurse with the Chicago Health Department, writing in its obituary: "It was owing to her untiring efforts in the care of the sick that she contracted the illness that caused her death."

The Jan. 9 *Woodstock Sentinel* detailed the passing of F. Subbin of Marengo, "a big strong healthy looking man, he took sick and died in two days." He was followed to the grave by 34-year-old Herbert Bruce Fellows, also of Marengo, on Jan. 15. He left a wife and five children, one of whom was also dangerously ill with Spanish Influenza.

"Richard Patrick [Marengo businessman], quite ill with the flu, is now on the road to recovery."

"Howard Patrick [Marengo] was able to make a trip downtown last week. For the first time in weeks."

"The Vermont Street school is closed this week on account of the illness of the teacher, Miss Burgin. Several of the pupils are also ill with influenza."

– Jan. 16 and Jan. 30, 1919 – *Marengo Republican-News*

Thirty-nine-year-old Albert Kohlberg of Union died Jan. 22 after suffering only two days with pneumonia. He, too, left a wife and five children, all of whom were sick with the same illness. Mrs. Paul Piske, 30, of rural Marengo died on Jan. 27 of bronchial pneumonia. Her husband and one of her five children were also ill with pneumonia. Albert Dallman of Coral, father of two, also died on the 27th, in his case of pneumonia.

The Feb. 6 edition of the *Republican-News* brought word of the passing of Henry Stoxen, the 66 year- old president of the Bank of Union. The editors noted that his death on Jan. 28 was unexpected and that his two daughters also were also ill with the flu. Charles Camp, 32, of Garden Prairie, died Feb. 6 of pneumonia. The last of the 25 recorded area deaths was that of Henry Steinke, of Huntley, in early March. He, too, died of pneumonia after an illness of just a few days, leaving a wife and two small children.

"The Burr Oak School was closed last week due to the illness of teacher Wanda Koltz. She has recovered sufficiently to resume her duties."

"The social that was to be given in the Java school [Riley Twp.] has been postponed indefinitely on account of sickness."

– Feb. 20, and 27, 1919 – *Marengo Republican-News*

McHenry, Johnsburg Area

McHenry and Johnsburg in the northeastern part of the county appear to have been spared much of the early suffering experienced elsewhere. No reports of illness or death appeared in the local press until early October 1918. Then, tucked away on page 5 of the *McHenry Plaindealer,* came a notice that the Catholic Order of Foresters of Johnsburg had cancelled their festival "as a precaution against the spread of disease." This small article proved an accurate portent.

Mrs. Edward Donahue, 22, died of influenza-pneumonia on Sept. 30 at St. Francis Hospital in Chicago. *The Plaindealer* noted that her passing was "doubly sad" because her new-born baby died just a few days earlier. She was survived by her husband, an employee of the Hunter Boat Co., and a 16-month-old son. Another double tragedy occurred little more than a week later. Mrs. Joseph Adams (nee Nye) and her young son, Leonard, died of pneumonia within two days of each other.

The Plaindealer opined: "Seldom are recorded such cases of sorrow so alike in circumstances, and the young husband and relatives so doubly bereaved have the sympathy of the entire community." Her husband, a Spring Grove merchant, survived. More warnings of approaching tragedy came in the edition of Oct. 17 with the news that the Ostend School west of town would "be closed for a short time for [the] safety of pupils, hoping that the influenza will not visit many homes." The same paper announced that a local soldier, John Unti of the McHenry Ice Cream Co., lay seriously ill at Camp Grant with influenza which had turned into pneumonia.

"Without church services, last Sunday was one of the quietest in McHenry County."

"Death rates are continuing to rise in the county. They are now two to seven times normal."

"Little Alice Clark is very much improved. She is able to sit up at short intervals."

– Oct. 24, 1918 - *McHenry Plaindealer*

October witnessed more sickness and death. Edward Simon, 39, was brought home to McHenry for burial. He had passed away in Crystal Lake "of the much dreaded influenza," leaving a wife and two children. Violet Claire Kramer, the 1-year-old twin baby of Mr. and Mrs. George Kramer, died at home on Oct. 22. *The Plaindealer* reported that she had been ill 10 days with the flu but that her twin brother survived. Oct. 31 brought word of the passing of Walter H. Bell, 29, "While never strong he had been in his usual health until two weeks ago." Gertrude Neiss, the 27-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Neiss, died of influenza at a convent in Milwaukee. She formerly taught in McHenry County schools.

"Little Everett Thomas ... has been quite sick with influenza but is improving nicely."

"McHenry schools took a "two week enforced vacation" because of the Spanish influenza."

"With 43,825 cases influenza "holds full sway" in Illinois among categories of diseases."

– Oct. 31 and Nov. 7, 1918 - *McHenry Plaindealer*

While no further area deaths were reported in November or early December, notices in the local press foreshadowed greater tragedy to come. On Dec. 5, the *Plaindealer* announced, "A few cases of Spanish influenza in and around McHenry have been reported during the past week." Then, on Dec. 12 came reports of several new cases in McHenry.

Mrs. Verne Lockwood, age 26, died on Dec. 27, following an illness of "brief duration," the paper said. "Her passing was a distinct shock to her many friends in McHenry." She left behind a husband and two small children. In quick succession came the passing of Miss Mary Parsley, who lived between McHenry and Terra Cotta; Mrs. J.C. Small, who also lived near Terra Cotta ("Friends were grieved to hear of her death"); and Miss

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Ellen Cooney, a McHenry summer resident and "brilliant young lady" who died at St. Luke's Hospital in Chicago. Miss Susie Herbes, the 22-year-old granddaughter of John Justen died Jan. 5 at the home of her employer in Chicago "in spite of all the best medical aid and the assistance of trained nurses." *The Plaindealer* noted that: "Her kindly disposition won for her the friendship of all her acquaintances."

Mrs. Mathias Smith (nee Mary Miller) of rural Johnsburg, age 36, died Jan. 15, 1919, of double pneumonia. The Plaindealer reported that she had not felt well for two days prior to her death but was "up and around" even on the morning of her passing. She was survived by her husband and four children. Mrs. Julia Wirfs, 49, "peacefully answered the call of the Almighty" on Feb. 4, following a battle with influenza and pneumonia. A professional nurse, she was known for her "kind and motherly treatment of her patients." Hers' was the 14th and final known death in the McHenry area.

"Quite a number of homes in and around Johnsburg have been visited by the flu during the past two weeks."

"Influenza claimed an estimated 100,000 lives in Illinois 1918. This is a conservative estimate. 583,135 deaths nationwide." – Jan. 23 & March 13, 1919 – *McHenry Plaindealer*

Woodstock, Greenwood Area

Woodstock at the center of McHenry County and the most populous town in 1918, appears to have been spared much – but not all – of the suffering experienced elsewhere. Why? Did residents practice better hygiene, social distancing, and mask wearing? At this late date it is difficult to know. One thing we do know is that many of Woodstock's fatalities actually occurred elsewhere – either on board a troop ship or on the battlefields of Europe.

The Woodstock Sentinel actually contained no reports of local illness or deaths until early October. Then, on Oct. 10 came the news of a double tragedy – Mrs. Lester Beers and her 15-year-old daughter died within a day of each other the previous week. The *Sentinel* stated that "both were attacked with influenza and lasted but a few days." The Beers lived on a farm southwest of town. The Beers lived on a farm southwest of town.

The following week brought news of two more fatalities: Charles Hermann, "a well- known citizen" who owned a shoe repair business on Benton Street, and Katherine Schildt, a 14-year-old sophomore at Woodstock High School who lived in nearby Hartland Township. Also in October, the Sentinel reported the death of 34-year-old farmer Ernest Fred Zimmerman from influenza and pneumonia. He was survived by his wife and four little children.

"The epidemic seems to be nearly ended in Woodstock but we must keep our guard up. The Princess Theater will be re-opening Saturday. A permit has been received from the state. Every precaution will be taken to prevent the spread of disease." – Oct. 31, 1918 - *Woodstock Sentinel*

Evidently some communities and physicians were relaxing standards and not reporting the true scope of the catastrophe they were confronting. Was this to allay fear in the community or simply to minimize the problem? At any rate, in early November the *Plaindealer* printed the following announcement from the state: "No community shall modify or relax quarantine restrictions without the authority granted by the state

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department of public health."

Then, in December came a more dire warning from Dr. C. Drake, director of the Illinois Department of Public Health. In announcing that physicians would be prosecuted if they failed to report cases of influenza, he stated:

"Failure to report cases or suspected cases of influenza or to keep the patients isolated during sickness and for a period of 5 days after return of temperature to normal, required by law, must not continue [emphasis mine]."

The second wave ran its course in Woodstock by late October. No new cases were reported in November. Then, on Dec. 5, the *Sentinel* announced that Axel Rasmussen of Greenwood had died at sea from influenza and pneumonia while in route to Europe. The following week they reported the death of Noel Akers of Woodstock of pneumonia while on board ship. He was buried at sea.

These deaths must have been either right before or right after the Armistice on Nov. 11. Then under the heading, "Young Business Man Dies in Nation's Service," came the announcement that Frank Wien had died of pneumonia in France on Nov. 9 – two days before the Armistice! Twenty-one-year-old Wien had just enlisted in the Marines in July. His parents owned Wien's Department Store on the Square where young Frank was in charge of the men's department.

"School is closed in Greenwood this week on account of the prevailing epidemic."

"Doctors are all busy looking after flu patients in Greenwood. Church and school activities are suspended."

– Jan. 30 and Feb. 6, 1919 – *Woodstock Sentinel*

The epidemic took an extended pause in Woodstock as there were no reports of death until Jan. 23. Then, the *Sentinel* announced the passing of Mrs. Ellen Persson after an "illness of about a week and a half." The 38-year-old mother of three was a native of Sweden. Next, death took prominent Woodstock resident Mrs. David T. Smiley, age 54. *The Sentinel* reported that her passing "resulted from a light form of influenza but ... took a rapid turn and developed [into] pneumonia. This, despite the 'prompt and most competent attention of physicians.

She was the "loving wife" of County Judge David T. Smiley and sister of Attorney C.J. Hendricks (see Harvard section). In the same edition readers also learned of the passing of former resident Edward Burnside on Jan. 15. Born in Franklinville in 1853 and a graduate of Woodstock High School, he became a prominent merchant in Poplar Grove where he resided at the time of his death from influenza.

In late February tragedy again struck one of Woodstock's prominent military families. Lt. Commander Edward G. Blakslee, in charge of Naval radio communications, died on Feb. 26, one day shy of his 31st birthday. Attacked by influenza on Feb. 18, pneumonia set in just four days later. He is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

His family received a personal letter from Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels. Admiral William Sims wrote, "To such success as this Naval Force has attained in the war your son was wholly responsible."

Commander Blakslee's passing was quickly followed by another Woodstock resident serving her country. Miss Carmelite O'Connor, formerly a nurse at Woodstock Hospital, fell victim to influenza while "serving the Yanks" in France. "She had been called to active duty in September and her illness lasted only 10 days," the local paper reported.

The 14th and final recorded area death was that of Mrs. David Hutchinson (nee Marjorie Davis) on March 15. She died at the home of her parents; her husband who was still in service was unable to get home for her funeral. ◆

Spanish flu left many in its wake

By ROBERT FRENZ

"Before Philip Kahn died of coronavirus on April 17 at 100 years old, he kept thinking about his twin brother, Samuel. When he told his life story to his grandchildren, friends and neighbors, it always began with Samuel, and now it seemed to be ending that way, too. The twins were born into a world still torn by the flu pandemic in December 1919 in New York. Samuel died of influenza just weeks later. Philip survived."

– April 25, 2020 edition of *The Daily Herald*

Was this the coronavirus pandemic of 2020? No! All of these things transpired a century ago in 1918-19. And, no, it was not the coronavirus causing all the misery, but rather an H1N1 virus known to history as the "Spanish Influenza."

The "flu" has been around for millennia. It devastated the Roman army in the 3rd century B.C. Columbus probably brought it to the Americas where it killed thousands of Amerindians who lacked immunity to European diseases. An epidemic in Russia in 1889 claimed at least a million lives during three waves.

The Spanish Influenza did not originate in Spain, although it did hit that nation – and its prime minister – hard. Other European countries, ruined by four years of fighting, applied that moniker to it in retaliation for Spain's neutrality in the Great War.

The first reported case was in March 1918 at an army base in Kansas. By April it had spread throughout the Midwest and into port cities on the East

Continued on page 14

A deadly virus – irrespective of income, social class, or fame – spread around the world.

Hospitals, full to the breaking point, turned away patients. Schools, churches, and theaters closed. Athletes played before empty stadiums. Stores and businesses shuttered their doors. Cities banned public funerals. Mass transit agencies reduced their schedules. A European Prime Minister lay hospitalized and gravely ill. Researchers sought an effective vaccine, as others debated the merits of vaccines. The virus even attacked the president of the United States. Health authorities recommended social distancing and good hygiene practices.

Some tried to hide the true seriousness of the disease.

Whole populations were encouraged – and, in some cases, required – to wear facemasks. Many doubted their effectiveness and refused to wear them. Fatigue with the restrictive measures set in, especially in the democracies of the world.

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SPANISH INFLUENZA—WHAT IT IS AND HOW IT SHOULD BE TREATED

Nothing New—Simply the Old Grip or La Grippe That Was Epidemic in 1889-90, Only Then It Came From Russia by Way of France and This Time by Way of Spain

Go to Bed and Stay Quiet—Take a Laxative—Eat Plenty of Nourishing Food—Keep Up your Strength—Nature is the Only "Cure"

ALWAYS CALL A DOCTOR

NO OCCASION FOR PANIC

EXTERNAL APPLICATIONS

HOW TO AVOID THE DISEASE

KEEP FREE FROM COLDS

THE SYMPTOMS

TREATMENT

PHYSICIANS ARE CALLED TOO SOON

Not Necessary to Summon Doctor in Mild Cases of Spanish Influenza.

REST IN BED IS IMPORTANT

Acute Shortage of Medical and Nursing Service Makes It Imperative That People Learn Something of Care of Sick.

Washington.—In an effort to reduce unnecessary calls on the over-worked physicians throughout the country because of the present epidemic of influenza, Surgeon General Blue of the United States public health service calls upon the people of the country to learn something about the home care of patients ill with influenza. Physicians everywhere have complained about the large number of unnecessary calls they have had to make because of the inability of many people to distinguish between the cases requiring expert medical care and those which could readily be cured for without a physician. With influenza continuing to spread in many parts of the country, and with an acute shortage of doctors and nurses everywhere, every unnecessary call on either physicians or nurses makes it so much harder to meet the urgent needs of the patients who are seriously ill.

Present Generation Spoiled.

"The present generation," said the surgeon general, "has been spoiled by having had expert medical and nursing care readily available. It was not so in the days of our grandmothers, when every good housewife was expected to know a good deal about the care of the

Coast. It arrived in Europe in May. By the time the disease ran its course in early 1920, it had affected one out of every three people on the planet and killed between 50 and 100 million. It was the greatest killer since the Black Death wiped out one third of Europe's population in the 14th century.

It was truly global in scope. Researchers still aren't certain how many died in Asia from the disease. In Brazil, which was particularly hard hit, soccer teams played before empty stadiums. Even the young Assistant Secretary of the Navy and future American president, Franklin D. Roosevelt, was afflicted on a troop ship returning to the United States. President Woodrow Wilson was sickened by the flu on his way to the Paris Peace Conference in 1919.

This 1918 pandemic struck – and killed – in three waves. The first lasted from March until July 1918 and, although relatively mild, may have altered the course of the World War I. Some 900,000 German soldiers, preparing for a great spring offensive before American armies arrived in Europe, were sickened by the flu. The second, and most lethal wave, began in late August 1918 and ended in early to mid- December. Finally, a third and less deadly wave hit in January1919 while countries still were reeling from the second wave. It ran its course by May. However, not all areas of the world were affected with the same level of severity at the same time.

Gruesome virus

The flu virus is a parasite, meaning it must have a living "host." It is an H1N1 virus and thought to have originated in animals or birds, especially water birds. It is transmitted in droplets of mucus (much like the present coronavirus) through coughs or sneezes. Furthermore, the flu is a "crowd disease" meaning it depends on people living in close quarters – such as military bases or troop ships – for ease of transmission. Actually, scientists in 1918 thought the flu was a bacterium and sought preventatives which were obviously ineffective. (Bacteria could be seen through an early 20th century microscope; viruses could not.) Even earlier, Italian scientists attributed the disease to the "influence" of the stars; hence the term "influenza."

This strain of flu arrived silently and without warning in 1918. An infection preceded particularly gruesome symptoms by several days. A victim's skin turned blue and then black, beginning at the extremities (hands or feet) so that the coherent patient could actually watch their impending mortality. People bled from the nose and mouth; teeth and hair fell out. Many experienced delirium. Caregivers reported their patients smelling like "musty straw."

Most victims actually died of bronchial pneumonia as the virus weakened the entire immune system and especially the lungs. This also led to a surprising upsurge in tuberculosis.

Treatments ranged from old fashioned bloodletting to the most modern medicines. Doctors "threw the whole medicine cabinet" at their patients, often with little effect. Aspirin and quinine were heavily prescribed. Others relied largely on patent medicines (see illustrations). Families unable to afford a doctor's visit relied on home remedies such as a goose grease kerchief wrapped around the patient's neck. Disease reporting was in its infancy, thereby exacerbating the problem. Social isolation, social distancing, and good hygiene were emphasized. Quarantines – the term comes from isolating ships for 40 days (quaranta) before disembarking – were highly effective where they could be practiced.

Author's note: Much of the disease information comes from the highly regarded 2017 book, *Pale Rider (The Spanish Flu 1918)* by Laura Spinney.

Warnings and Advice

Health professionals continuously warned the public about necessary precautions in confronting the epidemic. In early October 1918, Dr. St. Clair Drake, director of the Illinois Department of Public Health, compared the struggle to a war in which 800 Illinois cities and towns had been "invaded." He urged the public to be "on guard against the careless sneezer, cougher, and spitter." Included among the rules he issued were: "Do not visit the sick.""Keep out of crowds.""Keep your hands clean and keep your fingers out of your mouth," Also, "Do not use patent medicines

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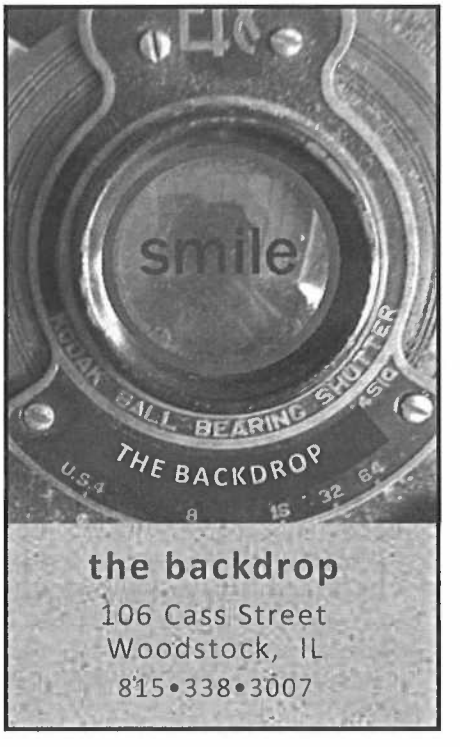


Continued from page 14

or other so-called cures." Lt. A.I. Froehlich of the U.S. Army took the analogy a step further when he issued the following statement:

"The mask has proven to be very efficient and should be worn by those caring for the sick. In Army hospitals, physicians, nurses and orderlies wear masks when attending their patients. If care would be exercised in civil life such as I have mentioned, which are orders and enforced in the Army, we would be able to combat the condition just as effectively ... ."

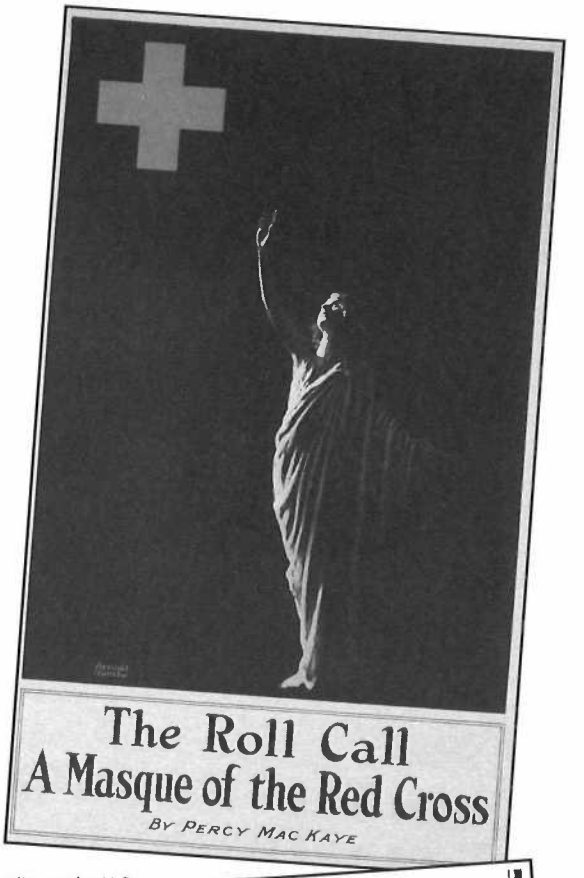
On the local level, Mayor Rolo Chamberlin of West McHenry advised the community in early October that the village board was closing all the schools, churches, movie theaters, lodge halls, dance halls, and "other places of public gathering" in an attempt to control the spread of disease. In a plea that now seems almost naïve to the danger that awaited them, Chamberlin exhorted the community:

"If everyone will observe the closing and do everything they can the danger will soon have passed and McHenry will be spared much sickness and possibly death," he said. "The village board and board of health thus kindly ask our people to cooperate so that the desired end may be obtained."

Sometimes the public received contradictory advice through the news media. (Note the news headlines [right] in back to back issues of the *McHenry Plaindealer* – the first on Oct. 24 and the second on Oct. 31).

By April 1919 news of the great Spanish flu pandemic passed from the local headlines after leaving 127 county residents dead, including 35 from the Crystal Lake-Cary area. Scores more suffered physical and emotional scars; others were left widowed or orphaned. We can only imagine the financial hardship felt by families bereft of a father's income – especially in the days before a social "safety net." Or, can we feel the pain of a young child left without its mother's nurturing care? ◆

The preceding article is dedicated to the memory of all those who suffered and died in this, the greatest pandemic of the 20th century. And, also to the families and health care professionals who ministered to the sick and dying.



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ILLUSTRATED CURRENT NEWS
To Prevent
Influenza!
Do not take any person's h
Keep the mouth and teeth
Avoid those that cough an
Don't visit poorly ventilat
Keep warm, get fresh ai
shine.
Don't use common drin
towels, etc.
Cover your mouth whe
and sneeze.
Avoid Worry, Fear an
Stay at home if you h
Walk to your work o
In sick rooms wear
like in illustration.
After the "Flu"
—Fever or Cold
Clean the Acidity and Toxic Poisons Out of the Digestive Tract
TAKE EATONIC TOD
FOR YOUR ACID-STOMACH
Avoid
Influenza
By having your system in good condition. Take Kerr's Flax-Seed Emulsion, Linonine, as a preventative. This well-known remedy restores vitality and builds up the system to a full health standard.
Linonine should always be taken at the first sign of a cough or cold, as it overcomes the cause and removes the danger. Best remedy known for bronchitis.
I recommend Linonine to all who are in need of a strength builder, or who suffer from bronchitial or lung trouble.—Rev. H. J. Lynch, Pastor St. Peter's Church, Danbury, Conn., 1886—1905.
Linonine has my hearty endorsement, both as a builder for run down people and as a for coughs, colds and bronchitis.—John Perkins, Principal of Conn. State Normal
Kerr's FLAX-SEED Emulsion
LINONINE
DANBURY, CONN.
All Druggists—60c and $1.20, or by mail on receipt of price.

Masked nurse From the Oct. 18, 1918, issue of the Illustrated Current News.

Tracer:

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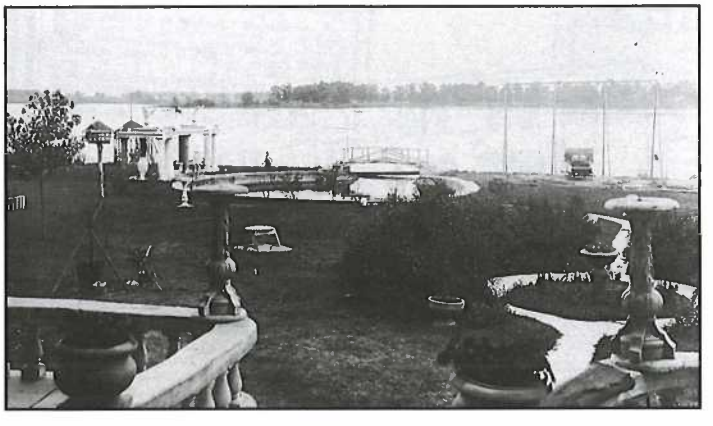
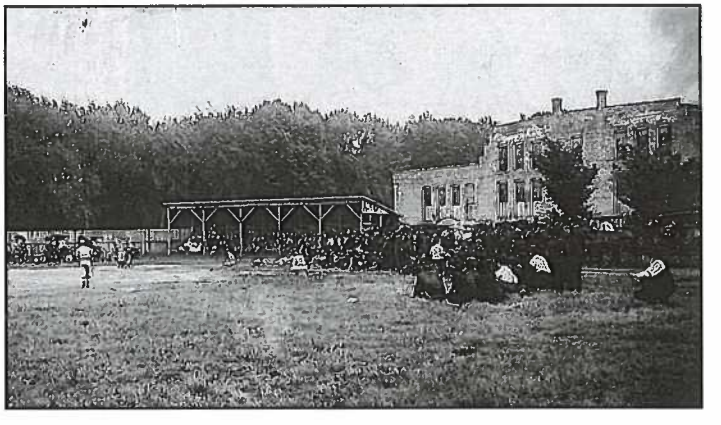
Old Mystery Photo



This circa 1930s' photo of the sunken gardens at Villa LeOrra, along the banks of Lily Lake, hints at some of the splendor that awaited the many visitors who attended weekend dances, weddings and more. Alfred Seyfferth bought the property in 1925 and built the home, pool and sunken gardens himself. He named it after his wife, LeOrra. It was the first home in Lily Lake, now Lakemoor, to have electricity. Fire destroyed the estate in June 1985.

New Mystery Photo



This baseball game supposedly drew 750 fans – no small feat at the time and not all that dissimilar to the number of fans allowed in professional ballparks during the current pandemic. Can you name the town where the game was played and the factory in the background that abuts the field?